

Chemical/Biological Incident Response Force

Discussion

The 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, Iraq's suspected possession of biological weapons, and the breakdown of controls on weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union reveal that the threat of biological or chemical terrorism has significantly increased. Because of the catastrophic potential posed by chemical or biological agents, the DoD has focused on preventing such an incident. It must, nonetheless, be able to respond to and manage the consequences of such an attack.

In recognition of this requirement the Marine Corps activated the Chemical/Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) in 1996. CBIRF is manned, trained, and equipped to respond to chemical or biological terrorist incidents. As a national asset, the CBIRF was used to support the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta; the 1997 and 2001 Presidential Inaugurations; the Summit of Eight in Denver, Colorado; as well as the January 1998 State of the Union Address, and April 1999's 50th Anniversary Summit for NATO, in Washington, D.C. CBIRF was recently moved to Indian Head, Maryland to improve CBIRF's responsiveness to the National Capital Region and better position the force for worldwide deployment

CBIRF is capable of rapid response to chemical or biological incidents. When such an incident occurs, CBIRF immediately deploys to the affected site to provide a number of significant initial consequence management capabilities. These include: coordinating initial relief efforts; security and isolation at the affected site (when authorized); detection, identification, and limited decontamination of personnel and equipment; expert medical advice and assistance; and service support assistance. Throughout its response, civilian and government consultants advise CBIRF in areas related to chemical or biological incidents. When not training, exercising, or responding to an incident, CBIRF personnel provide training to other organizations. CBIRF also continues to develop countermeasures, force protection training, and equipment support packages for deploying MEU(SOC)s. CBIRF will assist in the development of new doctrine, equipment, techniques, and procedures for responding to a chemical or biological attack or incident. Additionally, CBIRF assists federal, state, and local response forces develop chemical and biological incident training programs. CBIRF offers a model for developing similar capabilities elsewhere within DoD.

Marine Corps Position

DoD has a limited ability to respond effectively to chemical and biological incidents. The Marine Corps contributes to the national response capability by manning and equipping a consequence management force package specifically designed to respond to terrorist initiated chemical or biological incidents. CBIRF continues to develop the concepts, doctrine, organization, tactics, techniques, and procedures necessary to remain the Nation's premier incident response force. Additionally, CBIRF remains focused on increasing its capabilities in two areas: development of countermeasure and force protection training and equipment support packages for deploying MEU(SOC), and assistance to federal, state, and local response forces in development of internal training programs.

